COLLECTOR'S CORNER NO. 83 MAY 14, 1976
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FURNITURE: COLLECTING BOOM

ANNCR: AND NOW, COLLECTOR'S CORNER -- THE VOICE OF AMERICA SERIES OF PROGRAMS FOR LISTENERS WHO COLLECT THINGS -- WHETHER THEY BE STAMPS OR COINS, SNUFF BOTTLES OR OLD AUTOS, OR MERELY BALLS OF STRING. HERE IS------ WITH A REPORT ON A GROWING MARKET FOR COLLECTORS OF FURNITURE.

NARR: NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICANA HAS COME ALIVE AGAIN -- APPARENTLY BROUGHT ON TO SOME EXTENT BY THE BICENTENNIAL. FURNITURE DEALERS FROM THE MOST EXPENSIVE ANTIQUE SHOPS TO COUNTRY ANTIQUE AUCTIONEERS ARE REPORTING THEIR WARES SELLING BETTER THAN EVER. ALL SHAPES, ALL SIZES, AND ALL PRICES ARE REPRESENTED, WITH AN 1810 SHERATON SIDEBOARD SELLING FOR SEVENTEEN-THOUSAND-FIVE-HUNDRED DOLLARS IN A NEW YORK SHOP. AND ROUGH-HEWN PIECES STILL GOING FOR LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS AT COUNTRY AUCTIONS.

DEALERS REPORT THAT YOUNGER AMERICANS -- THIRTY-FIVE AND UNDER -- SEEM TO BE THE BIGGEST BUYERS, BECAUSE THEY NOW HAVE LEARNED THEY CAN FURNISH THEIR HOUSES WITH 19TH CENTURY FURNITURE FOR JUST ABOUT THE SAME PRICE THEY WOULD PAY FOR CONTEMPORARY PIECES. ONE NEW YORK DEALER REPORTS THAT MANY OF THE 19TH CENTURY STYLES OF FURNITURE HAVE DOUBLED IN VALUE IN THE PAST TEN YEARS.

NARR: (CONT'D) SO BUYERS FEEL THAT OWNING FURNITURE OF THIS TYPE IS AN INVESTMENT, BECAUSE TRULY GOOD FURNITURE DOES NOT DEPRECIATE IN VALUE, IT INCREASES -- OR AS THE DEALERS SAY: "IT APPRECIATES."

BUT THE REAL FURNITURE COLLECTOR DOES NOT BUY A PIECE SIMPLY BECAUSE HE LIKES THE WAY IT LOOKS. THIS IS A MARKET THAT TAKES A LOT OF STUDY, AND THE BUYER HAS TO KNOW THE PERIODS HE'S INTERESTED IN.

THE AMERICAN PERIOD CALLED "FEDERAL", FOR INSTANCE, COVERS FURNITURE MADE ONLY BETWEEN THE YEARS 1790 TO 1815. DEALERS WHO SHOULD KNOW SAY THAT FOR THE FURNITURE INVESTOR, FEDERAL IS BETTER THAN THE 18TH CENTURY CHIPPENDALE AND QUEEN ANNE STYLES. IT COSTS ABOUT HALF AS MUCH, AND PROBABLY WILL SHOW THE BEST PRICE APPRECIATION DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS. DEALERS SUGGEST THE BEST BUYS ARE SMALL CHAIRS, CARDTABLES, SIDEBOARDS AND LOVE SEATS. THESE PIECES, THEY POINT OUT, FIT WELL IN SMALLER, MODERN APARTMENTS AND HOUSES. PRICES RANGE FROM ABOUT TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR A SMALL CHAIR, TO ABOUT 25-THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR A REALLY GOOD SIDEBOARD.

YOUNG BUYERS HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE TRICK IN BUYING FURNITURE OF THIS TYPE IS TO GET SMALLER PIECES THAT ARE NOT TOO ORNATELY DECORATED, SO THEY'LL MIX EASILY WITH PRESENT-DAY STYLES.

NARR: (CONT'D) FURNITURE OF THE EMPIRE AND VICTORIAN PERIODS -- WHICH WERE THE YEARS 1815 TO 1900 -- APPRECIATES MUCH MORE SLOWLY THAN THAT OF THE FEDERAL PERIOD, AND DEALERS SUGGEST THE BUYER AGAIN SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE LIGHTER AND LESS ORNATE PIECES.

FINALLY, THERE IS THE COUNTRY OR SO-CALLED "PRIMITIVE" FURNITURE STYLE. THIS IS SIMPLY DESIGNED -- ESPECIALLY PIECES MADE BEFORE 1870 -- AND THE VALUE OF GOOD PIECES HAS NEARLY DOUBLED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS. IT'S STURDY, BUT WITH BEAUTY AND GRACE TO IT. "BUT," THE DEALERS WARN, "LET THE BUYER BEWARE. LOOK CAREFULLY AND DO YOUR HOMEWORK." BECAUSE THE STYLES OF COUNTRY FURNITURE ARE EASY TO FAKE AND DIFFICULT TO AUTHENTICATE.

WHICH BRINGS TO MIND THE YOUNG DELAWARE COUPLE WHO BOUGHT AN OLD OAKEN BED AND A MATCHING DRESSER WITH A LARGE MIRROR. THEY PAID THE COUNTRY STORE PROPRIETOR TWENTY DOLLARS, LOADED THE TWO PIECES ON A SMALL TRUCK AND TOOK THEM HOME. THAT WAS IN 1950. THE TWO PIECES WERE APPRAISED A FEW YEARS AGO -- AND THEIR VALUE WAS A LITTLE MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS. IN THIS CASE, NEITHER THE BUYERS NOR THE SELLER KNEW THE REAL VALUE OF THE OLD BED AND DRESSER WHEN THEY WERE PURCHASED. SO -- LET THE DEALER BEWARE, TOO. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN <u>COLLECTORS' CORNER</u>, NOTES ON THE WORLD OF COLLECTORS WHO BUY AND SELL AND, ABOVE ALL, CHERISH THINGS FROM STAMPS TO -- OLD BED AND DRESSER SETS. NEXT WEEK (AT THIS TIME), ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE <u>COLLECTORS' CORNER</u>. THIS IS----------.

-O- WJL/RCS